

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
Case File No.: A-033717
AK-040-02EA-008

Applicant: United States Air Force

Type of Action: Partial Revocation of Public Land Order No. 2374, Port Moller Radio Relay Site

Location: Tract A, Sections 19, 20, 30, 33, and 34, T. 48 S., R. 72 W., Seward Meridian, Alaska.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Port Moller Radio Relay site is located on the Alaska Peninsula northeast of Herendeen Bay, approximately 540 air miles southwest from Anchorage, Alaska and is accessible only by air or water. The local population consists of employees of a Peter Pan seafood cannery located on the gravel spit at the northeast entrance of Port Moller Bay, approximately seven road miles from the site. The cannery is seasonally operated (May through September). The summer population may exceed 100. The winter population is one caretaker.

The Air Force constructed its facilities at Port Moller in 1959. The site totals 304.18 acres and served as a communications link between similar sites at Cold Bay and Port Heiden, Alaska. The Port Moller Radio Relay Site initially functioned as a co-located Defense Early Warning (DEW) radar site and a White Alice tropospheric facility until 1969, when it was converted to a radio relay site. With the advent of remote satellite communications and satellite earth stations in the 1970's, this site became obsolete, and became inactive in November of 1978.

The site consisted of three separate areas:

1st area: the main site, a radio relay located on a 1,000 foot elevation plateau, consisting of a composite facility which housed operations, four 60 ft. tall tropospheric antennas, a water pumphouse, a septic tank with surface discharge and several underground and above ground fuel storage tanks;

2nd area: a fuel storage/supply area located on the shoreline at the foot of the plateau, consisting of two 210,000 gallon above ground fuel storage tanks, a fuel pumphouse and a supply warehouse; and the

3rd area: 3,500 foot gravel airstrip and parking apron areas.

This portion of Public Land Order (PLO) 2374 is no longer being used for the purpose originally withdrawn. The State of Alaska has identified this portion of the withdrawal as part of their entitlement under the Statehood Act under selection application AA-5363.

Upon revocation of the subject PLO, it will be opened to the mining laws and be made available to the State of Alaska for conveyance.

A. Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action:

The partial revocation of PLO 2374, as it effects the Port Moller area, containing approximately 304.18 acres of land, is needed because the lands are not being used for the purpose for which they were withdrawn. A majority of this township has been conveyed to the State of Alaska under Tentative Approval dated

September 28, 1979, and the revocation will make the remaining land available to the State. If the land is not conveyed to the State of Alaska the revocation will open the land to metalliferous and non-metalliferous mining and mineral leasing.

B. Conformance With Land Use Plan:

No land use plan exists for this area. However, the environmental analysis assesses the impacts of the Proposed Action and provides a basis for a decision on the proposal 43 CFR 1610.8 (b)(1).

II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVE

A. Proposed Action:

The Proposed Action is the partial revocation of PLO 2374, as it affects the Port Moller area, containing approximately 304.18 acres. See attached map.

B. No Action Alternative:

The No Action Alternative would leave the land withdrawn by PLO 2374, under the administration of the U.S. Department of the Air Force.

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

A. Critical Elements:

The following critical elements of the human environment have been analyzed and are either not present or will not be affected by the Proposed Action:

Air Quality

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

Environmental Justice

Farmlands (Prime or Unique)

Floodplains

Invasive, Non-native Species

Native American Religious Concerns

Threatened and Endangered Species

Water Quality (Surface/Ground)

Wetlands/Riparian Zones

Wild and Scenic Rivers

Wilderness

1. Cultural Resources:

On December 13, 2001, the BLM sent an information packet regarding the revocation of the Port Moller Radio Relay Site for 304.18 acres to the State Historic Preservation Officer, (SHPO) in accordance with the 1991 Programmatic Agreement regarding the Revocation of Withdrawals with the Alaska SHPO and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. The

SHPO's office did not respond within the 30 day comment period and their concurrence with the action is assumed. No archaeological resources are known or expected for the three parcels known as XPM-00052. This Cold War site exists in a deteriorated condition but has been included in the Cold War facility listing as well as the Alaska Heritage Resource Survey, so its location will not be lost. Its construction is a standard Aleutian design. The Port Moller site should be further documented should demolition be planned or if this land leaves State of Alaska ownership.

2. Subsistence:

The site is currently Federal Public Lands as defined in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (ANILCA). The lands fall under the regulatory authority of the Federal Subsistence Board. Current subsistence resources and uses are not documented at this site.

3. Wastes (Hazardous/Solid):

The Air Force used the upper and lower landfills during operation of the site in the 1960's. The two outfall ditches started near the composite facility. The Alaska District Army Corps of Engineers (COE) and the United States Air Force each performed portions of the environmental restoration work at Port Moller under the oversight of the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC). In 1995, the outfall ditch was excavated for remediation of petroleum contamination and cleaned to acceptable levels under federal and state laws. Approximately 9,500 cubic yards of soil contaminated with mostly diesel range organics was removed from the ditch and remediated. But as of 1996, some subsurface residual petroleum contamination remained near the excavated area. However, ADEC, the Air Force and the COE agreed that the clean up adequately protected human health, safety, welfare and the environment.

On June 4, 1981, the U.S. Department of the Air Force, submitted a Notice of Intention to Relinquish, covering 304.18 acres of land withdrawn from the public domain by PLO 2374, and described as the Department of the Air Force Port Moller Radio Relay Site. A determination was made that certain environmental and clean-up actions were required prior to the site(s) being returned to public land status. The COE notified the BLM by letter dated September 7, 2001, that restoration of the site(s) had been completed. On December 14, 2001, the BLM Hazardous Materials Program Lead for Alaska also concurred with the environmental

restoration activities at the site, and recommended acceptance of the land back to the public domain.

B. Land Status:

The Port Moller Radio Relay site is located on the Alaska Peninsula northeast of Herendeen Bay, approximately 540 air miles southwest from Anchorage, Alaska.

The radio relay site parcels are surrounded by State of Alaska, General Grant Tentatively Approved lands. PLO No. 2374 segregated the subject lands from all forms of appropriation under the public land laws. The State of Alaska identified these parcels as part of their entitlement under the Statehood Act under selection application AA-5363. If the withdrawal is lifted, a valid selection will attach to these parcels. The parcels are not on the current conveyance priority list.

There are two U.S. Army COE authorized 44 LD 513 rights-of-way, serial numbers A-033931 and AA-9605, for buried communication cables in support of the Port Moller Radio Relay Site. These are pending review by the COE for possible relinquishment.

Additionally, Peter Pan Seafoods had two leases with the BLM, serial numbers A-049284 for water supply for cannery operations and A-049285; for airfield use. These leases have expired and Peter Pan Seafoods is applying to the State of Alaska for continued operations.

The Port Moller Radio Relay site consists of the following three separate tracts:

Tract A

Commencing at U.S.L.M.S. 1147, latitude 55°59'28" N., longitude 160°34'29.374" W., 1927 N.A.D; thence, S. 73°32'44" E., 16.040.33 feet to Point "Site"; thence North 1,000 feet to the point of beginning; thence

East, 1,000 feet;

South, 2,000 feet;

West, 2,000 feet;

North, 2,000 feet;

East, 1,000 feet to the point of beginning.

Containing 91.83 acres.

Tract B

Commencing at U.S.L.M.S. 1147, latitude 55°59'28" N., longitude 160°34'29.374" W., 1927 N.A.D.; thence, N. 30°18'42" E., 3,785.54 feet to the point of beginning; thence

N. 59°32'30" W., 750 feet;

N. 30°27'30" E., 5,500 feet;

S. 59°32'30" E., 1,500 feet;

S. 30°27'30" W., 5,500 feet;

N. 59°32'30" W., 750 feet to the point of beginning.

Containing 189.39 acres.

Tract C

Commencing at U.S.L.M.S. 1147, latitude 55°59'28" N., longitude 160°34'29.374" W., 1927 N.A.D.; thence, S. 73°32'44" E., 10,580 feet to the point of beginning; thence

N. 83° E., 730 feet;

S. 7° E., 1,000 feet;

S. 83° W., 1,000 feet;

N. 7° W., 1,000 feet;

N. 83° E., 270 feet to the point of beginning.

Containing 22.96 acres.

Aggregating 304.18 acres.

C. Minerals:

PLO No. 2374 segregated the subject lands from all forms of appropriation under the mining law, but not the mineral leasing laws, or the Act of July 31, 1947, 30 U.S.C. 601-604 for disposals of materials.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A. Impacts of the Proposed Action:

The proposed partial revocation is administrative in nature and would have no impacts on the human environment. The State of Alaska identified these parcels as part of their entitlement under the Statehood Act in selection application AA-5363. The partial revocation of PLO 2374 will allow a valid selection to attach to these parcels. An indirect impact is that when the selection attaches, authority for management of subsistence will be transferred from the Federal Subsistence Board to the State of Alaska. The ultimate land uses and management under the State of Alaska are not known nor can they be speculated.

Therefore, it is unknown how the Proposed Action will indirectly impact subsistence resources and uses. See the attached Section 810 ANILCA Compliance/Clearance for more information regarding subsistence.

- B. Impacts of the No Action Alternative:
There are no impacts under the No Action Alternative.
- C. Cumulative Impacts:
There are no residual or cumulative impacts.
- D. Mitigation Measures:
There are no mitigation measures needed. Although an indirect impact has been identified which could affect subsistence resources and uses. ANILCA clearly states that Section 810 for subsistence cannot be construed to prohibit or impair the ability of the State to make land selections and receive any conveyances pursuant to the Alaska Statehood Act.

V. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

- A. List of Preparers:
Debbie Blank, Botanist
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